

Lega (Balega, Rega, Walega, Warega), Democratic Republic of the Congo

Ceremonial mask. The 100,000 to 250,000 Lega inhabit the forest region in eastern DRC. They do not possess a centralized political organization, and both men and women aspire to moral authority by gaining high rank in the *bwami* initiation association. Many categories of objects,



including masks are used in connection with the

association's activities. Wooden masks with heart-shaped, concave faces painted with white pigment are owned, in some areas, by every male member of the most advanced level of the second highest grade of the *bwami* association. The Lega mask can be assigned different uses and meanings depending on the context of the performance. These masks are not worn over the face. Masks are attached to different parts of the body, piled in stacks, hung on fences, held in the hand, dragged on the ground, and occasionally worn on the forehead with the beard draped over the face of the wearer. Participants in most rites display their masks as a group in conjunction with particular dance movements and aphorisms, which vary depending on the context in which they are used.

Material: wood

Size: H. 17", W. 9", D. 3½"